

CHRIST In The Psalms

by

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*All things must be fulfilled, which were written . . .
in the Psalms concerning me" (Luke 24:44)*

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The Eighth Psalm

The Son of GOD becomes The Son of Man to bring "**many sons unto glory**" (Hebrews 2:10).

Psalms 8

- 1. O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.**
- 2. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.**
- 3. When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;**
- 4. What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?**
- 5. For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.**
- 6. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet:**
- 7. All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field;**
- 8. The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.**
- 9. O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!**

Let me remind my readers that these are studies, rather than lectures. There is not much profit in merely reading what someone has written about the references to CHRIST that appear in the Psalms; it is more profitable that we study the subject individually, obtaining help from such writing as pertains to this theme.

The title-line of the Psalm is a part of the inspired record; therefore it deserves attention. It reads,

"To the Chief Musician upon Gittith." The word "Gittith" means "wine presses," and is a term used to designate the autumn festival, the Feast of Tabernacles. Some believe that the title-line belongs to Psalm 7 rather than to Psalm 8. Over thirty years ago an English writer, James William Thirtle, wrote a book, "*The Titles to the Psalms*," in which he pointed out that whenever the "Chief Musician" line appears at the head of a Psalm, it should be considered as referring to the preceding Psalm. Many writers agree with Mr. Thirtle, declaring that his key is a real discovery.

Of this Gittith festival, which is the Feast of Tabernacles, Mr. Thirtle says: "This feast was not only the autumn thanksgiving in Israel, but a commemoration of the goodness of GOD to the tribes during the wilderness journeyings. The LORD made the people to dwell in booths, and thus became the Keeper of the nation.

"That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God" (Leviticus 23:43).

"The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul" (Psalm 121:5-7).

In this preceding Psalm (the seventh) the worshiper prays as conscious of the JEHOVAH's care and solicitude:

"O Lord my God, in thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me . . . Arise, O Lord, in thine anger, lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies: and awake for me to the judgment that thou hast commanded. So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about: for their sakes therefore return thou on high. The Lord shall judge the people: judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me. Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just: for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins . . . God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day . . . I will praise the Lord according to his righteousness: and will sing praise to the name of the Lord most high" (Psalm 7:1, 6-9, 11, 17).

Note in verse 5, the language of the vintage season, "**Let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it; yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth, and lay mine honour in the dust. Selah.**" The deliverance of Israel involved the judgment of their oppressors. Hence the Psalm anticipates the outpouring of divine wrath upon the heathen.

The other Gittith Psalms are 80 and 83.

According to Thirtle, this would leave us only "**A Psalm of David**" as a title-line at the head of Psalm 8; but on the other hand we have a sub-title at the end of the Psalm, which is generally applied to Psalm 9 but really belongs to Psalm 8, and which reads, "To the Chief Musician upon Muthlabben." The meaning of "Muth-labben" is "*the death of the champion*," and the reference is supposed to be to Goliath, whose slaying by David was the occasion of the Psalm. Psalm 144, in the Septuagint, has a title-line reading, "A Psalm of David concerning Goliath."

On Psalm 8 Mr. Thirtle says: "The sub-script title is concerning, or relating to, '*Muth-labben*' 'Death of the Champion,' i.e., Goliath, spoken of in I Samuel 17:4, 51 as '*ish habbenaim*, 'the man who came out between the camps' for single combat -- the champion. Having advanced to the giant in the name of the LORD GOD of hosts, and achieved a great victory, David now sings, "**how excellent is thy name in all the earth!**" (v. 1). The stripling who challenged 'this uncircumcised Philistine' with the words, "**the battle is the Lord's**" here says: "**hast set thy glory above the heavens.**" Clearly, David is saying that the LORD has made His majesty to be exalted beyond all expression; the weak had been made strong to 'still the enemy and the avenger."

The theme of the Psalm is JEHOVAH's greatness and His regard for man.

We are now ready to look into the New Testament for the proof of our Psalm's Messianic character.

Let my reader turn to Matthew 21. Here we have our LORD's entry into Jerusalem as "MESSIAH the Prince," as He is called in Daniel:

"Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times" (Daniel 9:25).

He was greeted with great acclaim. Upon His arrival at the temple He cast out the traders; and then the blind and lame came to Him in the temple and He healed them all. The Jewish leaders protested against all this, and especially against the hosannahs of the children; and they said unto Him, "**Hearest thou what these say?**" His reply was:

"Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" (Matt. 21:16).

Let us now look at Hebrews 2:5-10. Here the Messianic character of the Eighth Psalm is fully established.

"For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

Reference to our Psalm is made in two other New Testament Scriptures, and in each case the reference to MESSIAH is unmistakable.

"For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet.

But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all" (I Corinthians 15:25-28).

I have arranged this extract typographically in order to show the clear reference to the Eighth Psalm as applying to our LORD.

The remaining passage is found in Ephesians, and it is equally clear in its application:

"Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:21-23).

The passage is speaking of the "exceeding greatness" of the power of GOD to believers, which is the same power by which He raised CHRIST from the dead, setting Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places --

Thus we find in the New Testament a sure key to the true significance of the Eighth Psalm. It is Messianic. David's famous battle with the Philistine champion may well have been the human occasion of the Psalm, but behind David and his human purpose there was the HOLY SPIRIT and the divine purpose, and the words written down are not David's words, but GOD's; not "**the words which man's wisdom teacheth**" (I Corinthians 2:13). All the writings of David which have been preserved to us may be included in his own description as to method written in his old age.

"All this, said David, the Lord made me understand in writing by his hand upon me" (I Chronicles 28:19).

Coming back now to the Psalm itself, let us note, first, that it begins and ends with the same words: "**O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!" (vss. 1, 9).**

Of course, this language is predictive. It was not yet accomplished when the Psalm was written, nor is it yet accomplished; it points to a time yet future, when the name of the LORD our LORD shall be known throughout the world, and His glory shall fill the earth as the waters cover the sea. An understanding of this predictive character of the opening and closing words of the Psalm will help us greatly in our study.

In the words, Thou "**hast set thy glory above the heavens,**" we may, in view of the key furnished by the New Testament, see the person of our LORD. As Mr. Grant says:

"It is not the glory of moon and stars, spread over the heavens, such as the Psalmist speaks of in the third verse, but a glory is manifested in this Son of man, in whose lowly position just the order of his condescending love appears. Supreme in power, he is supreme in moral glory, and in CHRIST how does this shine out! Thus the praise of earth ascends to Him, owning His rightful rule: "**O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!**"

The mention of "**babes and sucklings**" is extremely suggestive. It is very probable, as others have pointed out, that David may have used these words in view of his own extreme youth as he faced the giant champion Goliath. Doubtless also they speak to us of the children acclaiming MESSIAH the Prince upon His entry into Jerusalem. But in the thought of the HOLY SPIRIT the primary reference was very likely to our LORD Himself, who in His first advent came to the earth as a babe and sucking and was "crucified through weakness," but who in His second coming will be manifested as the One to whom all power belongeth, in whom all strength is ordained, in whom all praise is perfected, and who will in due time "**still the enemy and the avenger.**"

Verses 3-8 point backward to the first man, and forward to the Second Man.

In the beginning of Creation GOD gave to man the place of dominion over all the works of GOD's hands. "**And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth**" (Genesis 1:26-28).

But, alas! sin soon came in, and with sin man lost his place of dominion and became Satan's slave. Was GOD's purpose, then, defeated? No. For three thousand years later GOD caused David to write the Eighth Psalm, and in that Psalm he pointed to a time when man should again occupy a place of dominion over GOD's works.

Another thousand years rolled by, and in the Epistle to the Hebrews the Psalm is taken up and the promise repeated and confirmed. Two thousand years more have nearly run their course, and its full accomplishment still waits. Man is still in slavery, "**sold under sin.**" "**We see not yet all things put under him.**"

"BUT WE SEE JESUS"

JESUS is our LORD's human name. When the eternal Son of GOD came down from Heaven He had not yet borne the name of JESUS. It was not until He had become a man that He obtained a man's name -- JESUS.

And when He went up into Heaven after His death and resurrection He went, not as He had come, but He went into the Father's house as a man. And it is as a man that He took His seat at

the right hand of GOD. For the first time in the history of the ages a Man sits there -- a man in his human rights as a man. And His session there at GOD's right hand is representative. Just as He died for us, and rose again for us, He now sits for us in Heaven, as GOD's token to us that He will finally bring to that place all the "many sons" destined "to glory."

The old hymn says, "Before the throne my surety stands."

Not so. But rather let us say, "Upon the throne GOD's surety sits. He is not our surety to GOD, but rather GOD's surety to us. And the fact that He sits there is GOD's token to us of our acceptance in Him -- **"accepted in the Beloved!"**

Thus we see that in the Man JESUS is begun the fulfillment of the promise of the Eighth Psalm. All power is given unto Him in Heaven and in earth. This is not yet made manifest, but the day is surely coming "**when at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father**" (Phil. 2:9-11). And when that time is come it will then be seen that the Man JESUS is the head of a new race, a race made up of all those who have found shelter under the shed blood of Calvary, and that to these the promise of the Eighth Psalm will be completely fulfilled, and they shall reign with Him in full dominion over the works of GOD's hands. Then, truly, the name of JEHOVAH our LORD shall be excellent in all the earth.

It ought to be pointed out that in quoting from the Eighth Psalm in Hebrews 2 the HOLY SPIRIT made a slight change in a word in order to fit to His purpose. The word is "little." In the Psalm it is stated that man has been made a little lower than the angels, meaning lower in degree; but in the Hebrews passage the word is one which means "for a little time," or "for a short while." This is exactly what our LORD was "made." For a brief period He humbled Himself, and though He had Himself created the angels He came away down to us, even going so far as to be "**to be made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him**" (II Corinthians 5:21).

The wonderful promise, then, of the Eighth Psalm will be fulfilled. We wait for it with confidence, for by faith "**we see Jesus.**" In Him is our hope, and our joy. In due time He came to die for us, and in due time He will come again to bring us into the Father's presence and to make us sharers in His glory for ever! Amen! Even so, come, LORD JESUS!

~ end of chapter 2 ~

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